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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000398

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR, WHA/EX AND S/CRS
INL FOR DIANNE GRAHAM, KEVIN BROWN AND MEAGAN MCBRIDE
WHA/EX PASS USOAS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR AND OMA AND DOCHA
INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: Cite Soleil's Door is Open: Proving the Concept
and Building Credibility

Ref: 08 Port au Prince 1439

¶1. Summary: The Haiti Stabilization Initiative's (HSI) integrated approach to civilian-led stabilization and reconstruction is bringing real, palpable change to Cite Soleil. Despite skepticism and stovepipes, it has done what it said it would do. Progress, as in the rest of Haiti, is fragile, uneven and by no means assured. HSI, however, has opened the door to Cite Soleil, building a critical mass that, with continued, targeted support from the USG, other donors, the GOH and the private sector, should continue the positive developments. HSI hits the two-year mark with the vast bulk of its projects completed or near completion and funding obligated and essentially spent. The remaining major component, completion of Boulevard des Americains, is scheduled for completion in early September. HSI now focuses heavily on transition issues and identifying synergistic opportunities and leveraging projects with other donors and the Haitian private sector. End Summary.

Why Cite Soleil Mattered

¶2. A major challenge for HSI was that many of the Haitian elite saw the effort as a quixotic waste of money at best, or at worst, a dangerously naive mistake that would play into the hands of vicious criminals and their political allies. If regular aid programs and the Government of Haiti had thrown up their hands in Cite Soleil, why was this effort any different? Similarly, the slum dwellers themselves were unwilling to waste much time on yet another doomed effort of do-gooders (unless they could rake something off for themselves). After a generation of multiple international peacekeeping missions, each promising to be better than the last, there is a deep Haitian suspicion that no program can really make a difference. That assumption of failure is even more true when discussing urban slums and Cite Soleil. Cite Soleil has an almost mythic stature as a dangerous place where failure is guaranteed. Going in, the importance of HSI's focus on Cite Soleil was not only the needs of 300,000 people in the slum, it was the potential positive example that it set for donors, the government, and the public.

BACKGROUND

13. The Haiti Stabilization Initiative (HSI) is a pilot project designed to test and demonstrate a whole-of-government civilian-led stabilization project, funded by DOD Section 1207. HSI was designed by S/CRS in concert with elements of DOD, USAID, INL, and the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Office of Caribbean Affairs (WHA/CAR) with input from most elements of the U.S. Mission to Haiti, including USAID and State's Political, Public Diplomacy, Regional Security (RSO) and Narcotics Affairs sections. The project focuses on Cite Soleil, a slum enclave of 300,000 (equivalent to the 4th largest city in Haiti), an area of metropolitan Port-au-Prince that was completely lost to GOH control until reclaimed by MINUSTAH military operations at the beginning of 2007. HSI is the only Section 1207 project that has a dedicated staff, intended to ensure flexibility and speed in implementation.

14. Three national USAID projects, administered respectively by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), CHF (previously the Cooperative Housing Foundation) and the National Committee for State Courts (NCSC), had goals and organizational structures that were deemed compatible with HSI's intense geographic focus and overall goals, and were used as the basis for HSI's Community Building, Infrastructure and Justice segments. The Security element is implemented through the Narcotics Affairs Section (NAS). Community Building was operational within weeks of the official launch of HSI in April 2007. Infrastructure and Justice were much slower off the mark, and the Police segment, requiring buy-in and trained community police

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officers from the Haitian National Police and a formal contracting process, slower still.

WHY HSI WORKS

15. MINUSTAH efforts to retake control of Cite Soleil were critical to long term success and a necessary precursor to the USG program in Cite Soleil, especially in light of the continued absence of any viable Haitian National Police (HNP) presence. Military action alone, however, would not have been enough. Equally, the UN's Quick Impact Projects (QIP), while useful in the larger scope, were not of sufficient scale to make a significant impact and regular UN budgeted programs were going to be too slow. HSI's USD20 million was designed to fill this gap between the cessation of military intervention and the inevitable lag before regular donor programs and GOH presence could begin to fill the void. Return of the HNP to the area through construction of police stations, training and the introduction of community policing will be vital in the long run to continue this momentum.

16. HSI's goal was to quickly stabilize the bitter and violent Cite Soleil gang-led environment enough so that regular USG programs, other donors and the GOH could begin to work normally, as they already do in other parts of Haiti. The key to HSI's success in facilitating the relatively rapid transformation of this distressed community has been its monomaniacal focus on integration in a specific geographic zone. No activities were undertaken in isolation or without linkages to as many other program elements as permitted by the project contracts. HSI has constantly looked to use its projects as leverage for buy-in from other programs and actors, or as a catalyst to generate other activities. There is nothing unique about the type or scope of the projects themselves; the difference lies in the original conception of the project AND in having a staff specifically dedicated to its implementation.

17. Speed was the other factor that played an important role, differentiating HSI from many programs that take to

two years from budgeting to first expenditures. With HSI's two year total limit came an all-consuming drive to bypass business as usual -- there are many in the private sector and in NGOs who were amazed at how quickly we responded positively and concretely to their ideas. This gave HSI enormous credibility in a community that had learned to assume most promises were never kept, at least not fast enough to do a slum dweller any good. HSI was different, and leveraged that difference into a new attitude on the part of nascent or reborn community grassroots organizations.

INTEGRATION, LEVERAGE AND SYNERGY

18. As much as a stabilization program or a development program, this was an anti-gang program and even a counter-insurgency program. Skepticism about the model was due to a basic lack of understanding of the difference of the approach. Tight integration of security and limited, targete\YQDQ2>Proving the Concept and Building Credibility

common violence.

INSTITUTIONAL AND PROGRAM CHALLENGES

19. Real coordination and integration is very labor intensive and difficult to sustain. Each office or agency is driven by its own program demands and larger mission. Thus, even with genuine buy-in from others, personnel decisions are driven by the agencies, not by the stabilization program. Other agency staffs all have "real jobs" they also have to do.

110. Agency stovepipes still drive programs and the common source of funds (DOD Section 1207) for HSI was only partly effective in helping integration. In order to speed the initiation of projects, S/CRS moved the funds to agencies/sections with existing contracts, but funding that was flexible became less so as the transferred funds took on the new agency's legal parameters/restrictions and contracting had to be done using that agency's procedures and within contract goals that might not be quite what HSI needed. Even if another agency can be more responsive, it can be painfully hard to shift money between agencies.

COMMENT

111. Cite Soleil today is a changed environment. It is less a hair trigger population ready to riot on command or in reaction to any number of catalytic events -- man-made or natural -- and more of a community increasingly trying to work together. This represents a depoliticizing of conflict and a more pragmatic focus on grassroots self-interest. The stage is set for regular aid, training, health, education, and microenterprise programs to begin operating, and they are. Elements of Haiti's private sector are coming around to the idea that there is value to be gained in promoting and supporting training and education opportunities and are beginning to consider the value of reinvesting in the larger neighborhood. We can say that in two years, despite difficulties both internal and external, HSI did what it said it would do, in one of the worst places in the Western Hemisphere. End Comment.

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